

LOCAL PLAGUE SPOTS

Citizen Describes Conditions in District Slums.

IS DUTY OF CONGRESS TO ACT

Should Condemn Alley Shacks and Permit Erection of New Buildings Only Under Conditions Assuring Thorough Sanitation and Comfort for Occupants—Reform Difficulties.

Editor The Washington Herald:

I am very glad to see that President Roosevelt is taking an interest in securing better homes for the poor. I have resided in Washington for forty-seven years, and he is the first President I have ever known in all that time who has interested himself in attempts to better the sanitary and other conditions of the nation's Capital. When, in a former message, he spoke of the slums of Washington and urged that something should be done to abolish or improve them, a District official in my presence expressed his indignation and declared there were no slums here. I think any person who will go through the alleys of the city and see the shacks in which the mass of the colored people live, or who will examine the photographs of them in the published reports of the Associated Charities, will agree with the President that there are slums which are a disgrace to the city and the nation. Only recently I read in one of our city papers of one case of eleven negroes, five adults and six children, being found in a shed in which a rough board partition had been erected to form two rooms. In one of these rooms the five adults, male and female, slept, and in the other were the six girls and boys, who had no clothing to cover their nakedness, and were nearly starved.

Not Familiar with Conditions.

Those who reside in the fine buildings seen by the occupants of the "Seeing Washington" vehicles, as well as the visitors themselves, have no conception of the conditions in the alleys of the nation's Capital. It is a shame and an outrage that a condition of affairs should be permitted to exist, and nothing but the most determined action on the part of the general government, whose duty it is, will ever rid us of the evil.

At the last meeting of the citizens' committee of one hundred, in 1906, I introduced a resolution asking Congress to stop the building of dwellings in the alleys. The resolution was unanimously adopted and a committee appointed to prepare a bill for the purpose. As chairman of that committee I prepared, and Senator Pettigrew introduced, Senate bill 128, which made it unlawful to erect a dwelling house on any alley of less than forty feet width in the District. It further provided that no permit for the erection of such a building should be granted until the government had been proposed to place the house was extended to the full width of forty feet its entire length, directly through the square, and until provision was made for sewerage and lighting and the extension of water mains to the alley.

Nothing was done at that session, and in 1907 I had the bill introduced again. In the meantime a United States Senator had purchased a lot in the square where I resided, and where the lots were 25 feet deep; and he persuaded the committee to change the bill to exactly fit the condition of the alley as it then existed, so as to enable him to cut off the back end of his lot for the erection of a negro residence. The bill was so passed.

In the meantime, two real estate speculators bought the back of some lots on the opposite side of the alley, on which they built two rows of houses, back to back, four rooms each, each of which was occupied by two negro families. There was no sewer, pavement, or lights, and a single hydrant in the alley was the only water supply. At that time there were 99 negroes living in that alley, and nearly every night there were rows and fights, which sometimes resulted fatally.

Dangerous Insanitation.

The alley extended lengthwise of the square, with a T, or cross alley at each end, and had a single opening midway of its length out to a street. As the ground was inclined, all the slops and dirt ran down to the lower end of one arm of the T, where it was then a foot deep, creating an intolerable stench. When there was a rain this overflowed and ran into the back yards, areas, and basements of the houses on the street fronts, and when a citizen instituted a suit against the District for damage to his property the court in its wisdom held that the District was not responsible.

After seven years, I succeeded in getting the alley sewered, paved, and lighted, but only by driving a member of the Senate District Committee in my buggy through the alley, where the liquid filth came rushing up to my knees, and the assistance of Senator Ingalls, chairman of the Senate Committee, inducing the two civilian Commissioners to visit it themselves.

In another extreme case on Ninth street, after years of effort, I succeeded in having a convenience condemned as insanitary, and the owner was ordered to remove it. Yet it remained there for seven years until the city sold a couple of years ago and built upon it.

Profile Sources of Disease.

As shown by the medical society in Senate report No. 623, in 1894, there were then no less than 14,000 box conveniences in the District, of which 8,300 were in the city proper, nearly all in the alleys! As it has been demonstrated that the flies which swarm about such places and the alleys convey typhoid and other germs, is it any wonder that typhoid fever should continue, notwithstanding the filtration of the water? If those who talk about beautifying the city, together with the authorities, would give attention to these matters, they would, in my opinion, accomplish far more good.

I am aware that Congress has authorized the condemnation of insanitary buildings, and that a few of the worst have been condemned; but that will never cure the evil, as past experience shows.

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For a congenial outing, in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, invigorating air, cool nights, beautiful scenery, fine game, water, and lots of pleasure. One thousand acres of ground, fruit, vegetables, plenty milk and butter from my own farms. Splendid accommodations at a price less than you pay now for boarding. You are permitted to attend an school for your own desire without extra charge to you. Send for particulars.

H. A. GRIPP,

German Artist,

Desk 11, Tyrore, Pa.

The general government itself should take the matter in hand, and should do it thoroughly and effectually. This is the nation's Capital, and wholly under the control of the Federal government. It is the duty of Congress, as the representative of the nation, to see to it that the Capital is made what it ought to be, not only the most beautiful, but also the most healthful city in the United States, if not in the world. And I sincerely hope and trust that the President will impress upon them their duty in that respect as effectually as he has in the matter of the packers and the railroads.

What Congress should do is to condemn the whole of this alley property, and prohibit the erection or occupation of any dwelling fronting on an alley, except where there is room to run a street not less than forty feet wide directly through the block from street to street, and then only when provided with modern sanitary appliances. Suppose it should cost a million dollars, or several millions—what if it isn't worth it, and wouldn't it pay in the end? It was by such a course that Churchill, when mayor of Birmingham, wiped out the slums of that city, and transferred the occupants into clean and sanitary homes. It took him some years to convince the inhabitants of the practical wisdom of the project, but since its accomplishment no one questions it. If he could do it there, surely Congress can here.

Disposition of Slum Dwellers.

"But," say the timid objector, and the owners of the shacks, which, as a general rule, pay a much greater per cent on their value than do the best built houses elsewhere, "what would become of these poor people? Where else would they find homes?"

There would be no trouble on that score. There is abundance of room and plenty of capital to furnish homes for them elsewhere than in the alleys. Only once let it be settled and understood that Congress had adopted and will carry out the policy suggested, and there will be no trouble on that score, for houses will spring up at once, even as some are now being built for them without this inducement. And, if necessary, it would be a very proper thing for Congress to advance the money at a low rate for the purpose of aiding in the good work.

Of course, it is not to be expected that Congress can be induced to act on to do this, but if the business associations, and the influential persons who induced the government to buy the Rock Creek Park and to extend the streets will combine and work for it as they did for these several projects, it can be accomplished in time, if not at once, especially if aided by the Presidential influence. It would not be at all unreasonable to ask Congress to do this at the nation's expense, inasmuch as five-sevenths of all the land within the original city was a free gift to the government by the original proprietors, and as shown by Senator Southard's report, in 1885, the understanding at the time was, that in view of this gift the general government was to make the building of dwellings in the alleys, streets, and one-half of all the lots being in the general government. The government does not, and never did, pay any tax on the property it owned, and the fact that the government is constantly reducing the proportion of taxable property by condemning private property for its own use, and which it must continue to do for years to come.

How Taxation Figures.

Another reason why the general government should do this is the circumstance that the nontaxable property in the District exceeds the taxable by about \$5,000,000, as shown by the official report of 1904, and the fact that the government is constantly reducing the proportion of taxable property by condemning private property for its own use, and which it must continue to do for years to come.

Very few Representatives or Senators, as well as our own citizens, are aware of these facts, but they are all matters of record, and can readily be shown.

W. C. DODGE.

709 Ninth street northwest.

POST-OFFICE AT SINGAPORE.

Troubles the Carriers Have in Making Their Deliveries.

The post-office at Singapore must be a Tower of Babel.

There are letters for delivery to Europeans, Eurasians, Malays, Tamils, Bengalis, Parsees, Arabs, Armenians, Singaleses, and others, says St. Martin's Grand. The postmen have their work cut out, and when there comes a Tamil letter they often have to beat up the country-side for the man with no fixed abode, and they often have to read out the addresses and origin of all their letters at each house they visit.

There are also obstacles in the way of the delivery of letters. Dogs, for example, The Malay postman is a Mohammedan, and when the friendly dog accosts him (dogs always accost postmen) the touch is a defilement. The postman must bathe. And the both must be taken before the next hour of prayer. Prayers are offered five times a day.

Either the postmaster of Singapore has no nerves or he doesn't open his explosive correspondence.

Fetched Him.

From Harper's Weekly. A young New Yorker of means, who maintains a residence at certain seasons near Greenwich, Conn., recently nursed a grievance against his immediate neighbor. The latter, it appears, had been appointed in vain to put a stop to the foraging of his hens in the New Yorker's garden.

Finally the New Yorker man decided to use the law. When appeal and persuasion had failed, one day a friend, who knew of the trouble between the neighbors, asked: "Still troubled by Blank's hens?"

"Not a bit of it," answered the New Yorker with a chuckle. "They're shut up now."

"How did you manage to accomplish it?"

"Well," explained the New Yorker, "every night for a week I put a lot of eggs in the garden under the grapevine, and every morning, when I was sure that Blank was looking, I went out and brought the eggs in."

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ATLANTIC CITY NOTES

June Opens with Annual Convention of Physicians.

CAR BUILDERS TO FOLLOW

Col. Thomas Potter Stakes Off Channel for Benefit of Yachtsmen Who Have Way of Running Upon the Sandbanks—Washingtonians Who Are Visiting the Resort.

Atlantic City, June 1.—Pouts and frowns featured May instead of smiles and happiness among the fair ones. It was all due to the vaudeville type of weather, which has never been of a kind to invite the maids and matrons to don their pretty hats and graceful gowns.

With the opening of June come the medecinos from all over the nation. They held their first session to-day on the Steel Pier. It is the annual session of the American Medical Association, and is attended by from 3,000 to 4,000 physicians and surgeons, who hold conventions in twenty different halls and rooms.

Immediately after they retire, the resort will be called upon to entertain the National Car Builders' Association. Both associations have the habit of chartering special trains and Pullmans to bring them into the resort in kingly style.

Col. Thomas Potter, vice commodore of the Atlantic City Yacht Club, who is a brother of former Minister to Italy, William Potter, is one of the great yachtsmen of the resort, and is devoted to the water. The State, through an error, having failed to provide money for the staking of the inside channels, Col. Potter has generously offered to personally bear the expense of marking them from here to Bay Head, twenty miles or more. These stakes are guide posts to the yachtsmen, and are appreciated because they avoid the aggravating accidents to strangers in these waters running their boats aground and having to remain fast aground until the tide rises.

Maj. Muzgett, U. S. A., is enjoying a two weeks' stay at the Glendale; he is a good fisherman, frequently taking a trip outside, with the captains of the Inlet yacht.

Thomas Dillon, secretary to the Secretary of War, is registered at the Wiltshire.

Lieut. G. B. Conley, a young officer at the West Point Military Academy, and Mrs. Conley are visiting the latter's parents, Rey, and Mrs. J. A. Aspinwall, of Washington, at Haddon Hall.

Rear Admiral Frank H. Eldridge, member of President Roosevelt's naval advisory board, is recuperating from an attack of la grippe, and is accompanied by Mrs. Eldridge at the Seaside.

L. P. Darrell, a well-known Washingtonian, is sojourning at the St. Charles for a brief time.

A. C. MacGinnis, who is a contractor from Washington, is a guest at the Kniss for a few weeks, and frequently goes fishing.

Mrs. R. C. Grayson, with Miss May C. Grayson and Miss Virginia Grayson, are nicely located at the Wiltshire for an extended outing.

Mrs. Arthur Snowden is visiting friends here for a fortnight and will start for a European trip early in June.

Miss Alice S. Miller, Jessie Miller, and J. Blake Miller came to the shore in their auto from Washington.

Late arrivals from Washington: Charles—Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, T. Harlow, Mrs. L. L. Linn and child, John J. Linn, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Green, Miss Louise F. McKee, Mrs. F. Stewart, Master T. Stewart, H. P. Stewart, C. V. Lawkins, A. Kayne, C. M. Hendley, Mrs. T. H. Stanton, Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Ellison.

Haddon Hall—Rev. and Mrs. J. A. Aspinwall, Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Kennard, Mrs. S. G. Calk, Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Lynch, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas S. Davidson, Miss Helen A. Davidson, Master A. S. Davidson, Miss A. F. Davidson, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Gillison, Miss A. Gillison, Mr. and Mrs. T. E. Ewenty.

Iroquois—Mrs. T. H. Stanton, Mrs. F. S. Kalk, F. P. Gillen, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Lang, Miss Elsie Lang, Mr. and Mrs. David S. Collin, Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Hallows, Miss A. D. Francis, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Taylor, E. A. McCurry, Miss Sara A. McCurry.

Chelsea—Miss Maude Merriman, Miss Helen Taft, J. Hillman, Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Dehnman, M. P. Redmond, Mrs. M. Otterbach, R. E. Otterbach, C. G. Harris, Miss S. E. Smallwood, Mr. and Mrs. George C. Vickers, David A. Pittman, Miss A. F. Pittman, Mr. and Mrs. Francis A. Garrison.

Wiltshire—Miss Susie Somers, Miss Alice S. Miller, Miss Edna Scheekles, J. Blake Miller, Jessie Miller, John S. Dillon, Mrs. D. C. Grayson, Miss Mary C. Grayson, Miss Virginia Grayson, Mrs. Arthur Snowden, Mrs. S. Small, Mrs. A. Whitson, Mrs. E. Whitson, W. R. Saker, Stephen R. Codrann, J. E. Kelly, A. C. MacGinnis, L. L. Somers.

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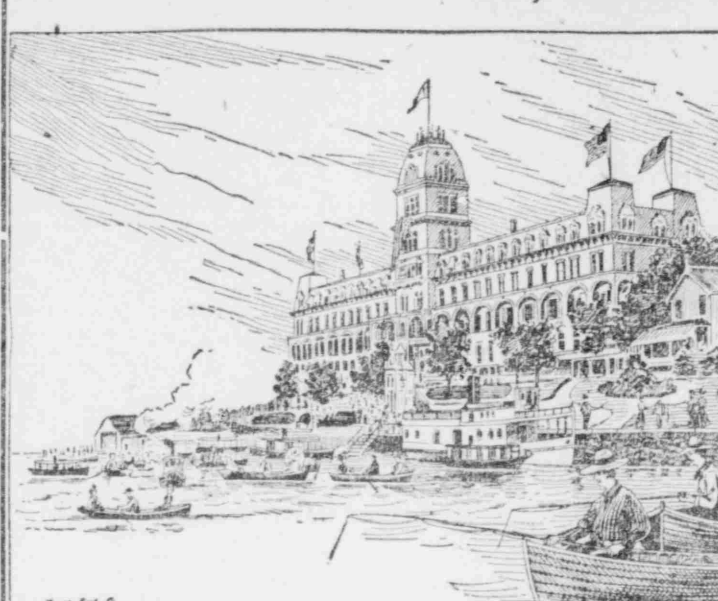
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